

SATISFACTION tendred to
all that pretend Conscience for Non-
submission to our present Governours,
and refusing of the New Oaths of
FEALTY and ALLEGIANCE.

In a **LETTER** to a **FRIEND,**
By **R. B.** late Rector of *St. Michael Querne, London,*
And now Rector of *Icklingham All-Saints, Suffolk.*

S I R,

I Cannot but admire at the Stiffness, not to say Obstinacy of some, in not complying with the present Government, considering the late danger of Popery, and that an Arbitrary Power was exercised amongst us by our late Rulers, in asserting their Dispensing Power, by the Mercenary Judges declared to be Law.

You may remember in our late Conference upon this Subject, you pleaded in Defence of your selves, and others, the Obligation you lay under to the Oath of Allegiance, with your Subscription to the Doctrine of the Church of *England*, contained in the 37th Article, and the First Canon of the Church: but if it appear that all this is rather grounded upon Mistake, than any solid Reality, I will not question your ready Submission.

A

Oaths

Oaths I confess are very strong Ties upon Men of Conscience, and they are to be tenderly dealt with until that Prejudice be removed; give me leave therefore with Sobriety and Meekness to enquire, Whether that Oath be still in Force, with the Obligation to it? if not, that Plea must vanish and disappear.

And here first, let me remind you of the occasion of imposing the Oath of Allegiance; it was injoynd to distinguish betwixt Church and Court, Lord and Subject; *Papists*, upon that horrid *Gun-powder-Treason*, which hath left a Stain of Villany and Cruelty upon that Religion, never to be wiped off; Read over the *Avowal* of that Oath, made by K. James the First in his Book of the Defence of it; And what is there said that you stick upon, *Protestant*? except that Clause of denying all Foreign Jurisdiction, Prince, or Potentate; And this you seem'd to start at, when you said the Prince of Orange was a Foreign Prince.

Will you be pleas'd in answer to this, to fix your Thoughts upon that of the great Apostle St. Paul, *he is excepted that put all things under him*. So here, without Question, the King may divest himself of all Authority and Power, and when this is done the Obligation ceaseth, as if he were really Dead. The Preface to the New Oath is not an authoritative Abdication; but rather a Declaration of Matter of Fact, *that the late King James hath abdicated*. So that in fine the main of the Controversy lies here, Whether the late King did abdicate? For, if he did, without all Question the Obligation of all Oaths taken unto him is ceased. In confirmation of the Affirmative, I shall endeavour to make it clear that any King may, And secondly, That the late King did abdicate.

That Kings may denude themselves of their Princely Power and Sovereignty, appears from what was done by *Charles* the Fifth Emperor of *Germany*, and King of *Spain* at the same time, who did abdicate both; and his Subjects took new Oaths of Fidelity to other Princes. Some of those Times might question his Courage, but none did ever except against the Validity of it.

May it not seem something unjust to deny this Liberty to Princes, when they and themselves overcharged with the Weight of Government, to retire into a Privacy for the better enjoyment of themselves toward Peace and Quiet? But I presume no Man will deny this *Principle*. It remains to prove the *Truth*, That the late King did abdicate.

I will not dwell upon what was done by the Metropolitan, and other Lords of the Council, upon his first withdrawing; they came into the City, and with the Lord Mayor sent for the Lieutenant of the Tower, seize upon the Keys, dispossess the Souldiers, place a new Garrison there, and desire the Prince of *Orange* to assume the Regency; Why all this, if he had not Abdicated? Upon what other ground durst they raise Arms, seize upon his Royal Fort? Or how can they excuse themselves from formal Rebellion and breach of Oaths, if this be not granted, and is not unrepresented, That Princes shall take up their Scepters again, when they have laid them down. But to pass by this.

2. I would willingly be resolv'd by any Thinking Man, whose Judgment and Testimony is most authentick in this Particular; Whether I am to resolve my self into the Judgment of the whole Nation, in a full and clear Representation in Parliament, or into the private Fancies or Opinion of a few Men? I remember what you once repli'd to this, That every Mans Conscience is to judg for himself in point of Practice. But do you not know when, and by whom this Principle was exploded, whilst some were prosecuted for meer Matters of Worship? And shall this be pleaded by those Men who so vigorously have acted against it, when in its own Nature it is so destructive of the Civil Peace? *A Line and a Line is an Abomination.*

Did ever any Government upon the Pretence of Conscience dispence with Disobedience in Things necessary to its Establishment? And can any Man expect to be excus'd from taking the Oaths, which is the only Moral Security the Government can expect or require; and upon this very Pretence, which if allowed, all Kingdoms must dissolve into Anarchy and Confusion; Religion and Conscience being the Common Pretensions of all Male-Contents. This may suffice to satisfy any sober Rational Man, that is not resolv'd to maintain the Conclusion, be the Premises never so weak.

Some there are that presume their Subscription to the Doctrine of the Church of *England*, in her Book of Articles, will not permit them to yield their Obedience to these Alterations. But if this shall prove a Mistake, and our Obedience shall be conformable to our Principles, will it not rather be esteemed Peccunies than Conscience?

To discover the Mistake, let us consider when, and by whom, the Articles were composed; and refer the Practices of those Times to the

Articles, as an authentick and clear Interpretation of them, and this also will vanish like Smoak.

1. The Articles were made, or at least confirmed, in the Reign of Queen *Elizabeth*, who was a constant asserter and maintainer of this Maxim, That it is lawful for a neighbouring Prince to relieve and defend the Subjects of another, when invaded in their Laws, Liberties, and Religion. Who was it that protected and assisted the *Hugonets* in *France*, against the Tyranny and Violence of their Princes? Was it not this Gracious and Heroick Queen? And who was it that protected the *Netherlands* against the Violence and Usurpations of the *Spanish* Monarch? And was all this contrary to the avowed Doctrines of our Church, of which she was the Defender? Was not this defended, or at least allowed of, by the Church-Men of those Times? must it be now inconsistent with the Principles of our Times? Do they bind our Hands, so that if we are invaded we may not crave the like Protection? Let any sober scrupulous dissatisfied Person give a sober Answer and Resolution to these *Queries*. The *Dutch Netherlands* erected a new Model of Government under her Protection, after they had shaken off the *Spanish* Yoke.

2. Let it be granted, what ought not to be denied, That the late King did abdicate, and that the Government did devolve upon the People, and these in a full Representative of the whole Nation, whether in Parliament, or in a Convention, (it matters not which, whilst that was a free and fair Choice) have constituted these to be our Governours; Are we not to pay and swear Obedience unto them, as well as their Predecessors? And if this were rightly weigh'd, would answer an Objection from that Declaration, in the Act of Uniformity, *I abhor that Traiterous Possion, &c.*

If after all this Men will fix all upon a *Jus divinum*, and fly to Scriptures, let them give plain positive Texts, for a general Form, with Rules universally relating unto, and obliging all Places and Men. If they cannot, let them confess that God hath left all Nations and People, to be ruled by that Government and those Laws, which are most suitable to the Constitution and Temperament of the People; and this I lay down for a Foundation not to be overthrown. But to Answer: those places which are so much insisted upon, that of our Saviour's, *St Paul's*, and *St Peter's*, we need to make use of that absurd Assertion of some of the Romanists, That this was only enjoy'd and to be performed until they had opportunity to make a Resistance.

This

This would stain the Glory of the Primitive Martyrs. Not a forced, but a voluntary Martyrdom deserves the Crown; however this gives a taste of the Loyalty of these Men and their Religion, to the maintaining of which the Popish Princes sacrifice all their Power and Policy.

But for a more Substantial Answer, by way of Satisfaction to these Scruples, let it be duly considered, that the Primitive Christians and we were under different and distinct Administrations; they liv'd under absolute Monarchs, their Grandeur was won by the Sword, and confirm'd by a pure Despotick Power; and therefore their Resistance had been unlawful, contrary to the Rule and Force of their Government: but it is quite otherwise with us. We are settled upon a *Gothick* Model, our Princes make no Laws without our own Consent; they are obliged to the execution of Laws made by our selves with their Consent; they have no Power to dispense with the breach of them by others, nor to invade them themselves. This was own'd by the seven Bishops, declar'd by former Parliaments; so that no Man is bound to pay their Allegiance any further; Let *Cesar* have what is *Cesar's*, and the Subjects what is theirs, their Laws, their Birth-right. In some cases Moral positive Duties are superseded by what is naturally Moral, as in the Duties of the fourth Command, so here. The Government in general be founded upon Nature, yet this or that Form is but positive; and if it be not consistant with the end of Government, Self-preservation, Why should not it be either altered, or fixed in those who will prosecute the right end, the Preservation of the publick Peace and Liberties of the People?

To what hath been said, let me add, *ex abundanti*, the late King's retiring into *France*; if it amount not to an Abdication, it comes near unto a Forfeiture, and no Prince or State can have less Reason to endeavour to restore him to his Crown and Dignity, than that Monarch. Whence hath he his Claim but from *Hugh Capet*, and he from the Election of the great Men of the Kingdom? and why did they pretend to lay aside *Charles* Duke of *Lorain*, whose Right it was by Succession, but merely upon this ground, He had joyned himself to the Enemies of the Kingdom? and so they transfer the Crown unto another Family, that of the *Capets*. And does not all Christendom in general, and the English Nation in particular, look upon that great Man of *France* as a Common Enemy? shall not that which may hinder Succession, justify in part a translating.

ing of it unto another? But (blessed be God) all these are cleared in an Abdication; and that asserted by the Representative Body of the whole Nation.

And now, good Sir, be perswaded to lay aside all Prejudice, submit your Sentiments to the Judgment of your Superiors, yield your Obedience and Fealty in taking the Oaths; this you see is your Duty, and not only so, but your Interest. It is not long since we were apprehensive of Popery, and the Church-of-England-Men did set themselves in direct Opposition against it, and all the Accesses toward it; for which the Generations to come shall call them blessed. But whence come these Apprehensions to be lessened? can we expect a perfect Freedom from these Fears, should he be re-admitted to his Authority? It is not possible a Popish Sovereign should keep Promise with his Heretical Subjects, as they stile us; their words and Oaths, if Roman Catholicks, bind no further then stands with the Interest of their Religion, and we know who both can, and will dispence with Oaths and Promises made to Hereticks.

Would you fetter him by Laws? these have been, like *Sampsons* Cords, easily broken: Would you place him under Tutors and Governours? He is no *minor*, cannot submit; *ant Caesar, ant Nullus*. Men are but Men at the best, and Time, and Preferment may alter their Judgments. However these would make him a Prisoner, and no King. Should we submit in hopes of another Opportunity? Would he not settle a Correspondence with Male-contents at Home, and Foreign Princes Abroad? and if he prosper in the Design, hath that Common plea, That his Promises are Void, because made by him when under Restraint? And then, What will become of all that is dear unto us, Religion, Lives, Liberties, and Estates? This is prevented by an Abdication; so that if he return, it must be by Conquest, and then he will rule by the Sword, we shall all be in the same Condition, lie under the charge of Hereticks, Rebels and Traytors; the Government chang'd from a regulated Monarchy into an absolute Tyranny, our Religion atrogated; we shall be sold as Slaves, or burnt as Hereticks. If Men love Bonds and Imprisonments, Rapine and Sequestration, Racks and Tortures, Fire and Faggots, let them continue this Humor and Aversation; but if none of these be lovely, as indeed they are not, let us bless God who hath redeemed us from the Hand of our Enemies, and the Hand of all that hate us. Let us joyn issue with the Divine Providence (which hath

hath delivered us from all these Evils) in submitting and yielding our Obedience to our Sovereign Lord and Lady, by whose Conduct and Courage we are brought into a state of Freedom and Peace. Be not affrighted out of this by the false Rumors and Reports, spread abroad by evil-minded Men, but let us unite in our Submission to our present Rulers, that thereby we may strengthen their Hearts and Harids in our common-Defence.

There remains one Prejudice, but no Objection arising from the vain Fears of some Men, that the Church begins to be shaken in her Authority, whilst matters of Religion fall under a Dispute, and no Convocation consulted with. But this, if fully considered, would swell a private Letter into too great a Bulk. Let me for the present desire you to consider, there is nothing design'd in Doctrinals, but meer Matters of Ceremony, and a relaxation of some Laws, not consistent with the greatest Interest of the Nation in this present Juncture, the Union of Protestants. And out of experience, that the severity of those Laws never reclaim'd one Dissenter, but rather did drive others out of the Pale of the Church; it is not unworthy of, but highly becoming the Wisdom of those worthy Patriots to find out a Method, whereby all Protestants of every Form may be brought into an easy Condition. This Subject, if this Letter find a candid Reception, may be more fully considered of, by

Your very Friend,

Servant, and Brother,

R. B.

London printed, and sold by Rich. Janeway, 1689.

